DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 686 SP 029 855

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TITLE School Discipline: Have We Lost Our Sense of Purpose in Our Search for a Good Method?
PUB DATE 18 Feb 88
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (New Orleans, LA, February 17-20, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Standards; Change Agents; *Classroom Techniques; Corporal Punishment; *Discipline Policy; Economic Factors; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Social History

ABSTRACT

The general economic and psychological evolution in America from a producer society to a consumer society has resulted in a conflict of purposes for American educators regarding school discipline. Consequently, contemporary American educators, unlike their forerunners, have ignored the long term social goals of classroom discipline. They have, instead, only been concerned with finding effective methods of immediate control in the schoolhouse. This paper explores this thesis and presents: (1) a general review of the history of school discipline; (2) a review of the professional journal articles on school discipline from 1940 to 1980; and (3) an analysis of social, political, and economic changes in American history. (JD)

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SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: HAVE WE LOST OUR SENSE OF PURPOSE IN OUR SEARCH FOR A GOOD METHOD?

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This paper was prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, February 18, 1988, New Orleans, Louisiana.

SP 029 855

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SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: HAVE WE LOST OUR SENSE OF PURPOSE IN OUR SEARCH FOR A GOOD METHOD?

THESIS: The general economic and psychological evolution in America from a producer society to a consumer society has resulted in a conflict of purposes for American educators regarding school discipline. Consequently, contemporary American educators, unlike their forerunners, have ignored the long term social goals of classroom discipline. They have instead only been concerned with finding effective methods of immediate control in the schoolhouse.

METHOD:
1.) General review of the history of school discipline;
2.) Review of the professional journal articles on school discipline from 1940 to 1980;
3.) Analysis of social, political, and economic changes in American history.

Horace Mann, 1845

"The object of school is to prepare for the duties of afterlife, it follows that the school is made for the world, and not the world for the school; and hence, however much any course may seem to promote the present good appearance of intellectual advancement of the school, yet if it tends to defeat the welfare of the future men and women, composing the school, its adoption is short sighted and suicidal."

John Dewey, 1900

"If you have the end in view of forty or fifty children learning certain set lessons, to be recited to a teacher, your discipline must be devoted to securing that result. But if the end in view is the development of a spirit of social co-operation and community life, discipline must grow out of and be relative to this."

Walter Monroe, 1950

"The modern concept of control recognizes the developing psychology of adolescence and regards control as a process of learning by which the pupil is guided in the responsibilities to the group consonant with good citizenship in a democratic society."

Eric Haralson, 1979

"[Discipline is the] sum of all decisions and actions school people take to maintain some semblance of institutional order and continuity through the school day and year."

I. You have before you four quotations which illustrate popular ideas on the social purpose of school discipline at four periods in American history. If you have had an opportunity to read these, you readily saw that there is a distinct difference in the perspective of the first three educators as opposed to the last educator. Of course, Horace Mann and John Dewey are known to all of us. The more contemporary Walter Monroe and Eric Haralson may not be as quickly identified, but they are certainly as representative of educators of their historical periods as are Mann and Dewey. I have chosen these four quotations to serve as touchstones as we explore today's question on school discipline: "Have we lost our sense of purpose in our search for a good method?" I hope today to go beyond a simple yes or no answer to this question and to address the more probing question of "why?"

The forming of these questions, as well as my conclusions, is based on an historical study. The heart of my study involved an analysis of 475 journal articles listed under the heading "Discipline" and "Discipline, school" in the Education Index from 1940 to 1980. I confined my study to articles directly related to elementary public schools in the United States. Simultaneously, I studied the changes in the broader society through general histories and contemporary commentaries. My rationale for the study is that school discipline policies, practices, and philosophies are directly related to the economic, social, and psychological concerns of the general society.

It is my major thesis that American educators are today experiencing a "crisis in school discipline" because they are caught between unrecognized, and therefore unaddressed, conflicting social purposes. Educators assume, and I emphasize the word assume, that they are disciplining children for participation in a democratic production oriented society. In reality, they are disciplining them for the needs of a consumer oriented society. Because there is an incompatibility between the assumed goals of a production oriented society and the inherent goals of a consumer society, American educators since 1965 have been ignoring the question of long term social purpose and concentrating on the immediate aim of finding methods, or systems, or strategies which will assure control of children in the classroom.

To understand how we arrived at this condition let us begin at the beginning, at least at the beginning of mass public education. The United States at mid-nineteenth century was the "pilot project," so to speak, of the experimental idea of republican government. The world was watching to see if this young republic could withstand the threat of anarchy and the pull of dictatorship. For the so-called liberal thinkers of that day the key to saving the fragile republic was education, public education for all of the people. Education of the masses was to instill the virtues of hard work, delayed gratification, frugality, diligence, and obediance to law and order. In short, it was to provide self-disciplined citizens and workers for a rapidly growing, industrializing young nation.

Horace Mann, the father of the public school movement, was clear about what he saw as the role of school discipline in developing a

strong productive nation. The school was to prepare young people for membership in this society. Mann may have wavered in his views about exactly how this goal was to be achieved as expressed by his ambivalence toward corporal punishment. And one could find much to question in Mann's belief that the charms and virtues of a pretty female teacher could dispell the pranks of young boys in the classroom. But Mann was firm in what he saw as the ultimate purpose of any disciplinary behavior in 1845 when he wrote in his treatise on punishment

> [T]he object of school is to prepare for the duties of afterlife, it follows that the school is made for the world, and not the world for the school; and hence, however much any course may seem to promote the present good appearance or intellectual advancement of the school, yet if it tends to defeat the welfare of the future men and women, composing the school, its adoption is short sighted and suicidal.[1]

II. If Horace Mann was clear on purpose and shakey on means, educators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were determined to remedy this situation. This period can be characterized as one in which educators and philosophers were searching for the ideal <u>method</u> of classroom discipline which would be compatible with society's and Mann's need for self-disciplined productive citizens in a democratic government. In short, the search for a "new discipline" was the search for a theory or philosophy of discipline which would be truly self-disciplining. Above all it would not be dependent on any form of external control, certainly not physical control.

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[1]Horace Mann, "Lecture VII on School Punishment," in <u>Life and Works of Horace Mann</u>, Vol. 2, ed. Mary Mann (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1891), p. 337.

By the first quarter of this century the "new discipline" seemed to be found in the ideas of John Dewey. Dewey was the American twentieth century philosopher. He was the philosopher of democracy, and above all, he was the philosopher of education. Like Mann before him, Dewey saw the key to the success of a productive democratic society in self-disciplined citizens taught in public schools. The relationship between method and purpose was what dominated Dewey's thoughts: "Interest and discipline," he wrote, "are correlatives of activity having an aim."[2] In 1900 Dewey explained the close relationship between long term societal goals and short term teacher goals when he wrote:

> If you have the end in view of forty or fifty children learning certain set lessons, to be recited to a teacher, your discipline must be devoted to securing that result. But if the end in view is the development of a spirit of social co-operation and community life, discipline must grow out of and be relative to this.[3]

Without question, Dewey believed that cooperation and community should be the aim of school discipline. The methods of school discipline had to be related to this purpose.

However, Dewey's philosophy of school discipline had one major flaw. No one seemed to know how to implement it. Interest as the key to self-discipline sounded great, and membership in a community had an appealing ring when rural communities were being abandoned for the cities. But just exactly how was that to be accomplished?

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[2]John Dewey, Education and Democracy (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1916), p. 137.

[3]John Dewey, The School and Society (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1900), p. 30.

III. By mid-twentieth century Dewey's philosophy of discipline had not been abandoned, but it had been modified. First, Dewey's key to discipline, namely interest, was now viewed by educators more in terms of an interesting curriculum rather than an innate interest in learning. Second, the popular gestalt psychologist, Kurt Lewin was shifting the emphasis of Dewey's philososphy of democratic group membership to a psychological study of groups. This psychological perspective could then be applied to implementing democratic classroom disciplinary procedures. Third, the impact of psychiatry and the mental hygiene movement was also making major contributions to educators' understanding of the unique individual who for some reason did not "fit in" the group.

As a result nearly 120 years after the beginning of public education and the beginning of the quest for a new discipline, Walter Monroe could write in 1950 that there was a clear consensus among educators as to what was the "old, bad discipline," and the "new, good discipline."

> Schools which follow the old concept that control is to be maintained by authority attempt to maintain order by rules and regulations governing pupil's behavior and impose penalties for violations of these rules. This method of administering control is now regarded as educationally and psychologically unsound and is found only in old-fashioned schools in more primitive communities.
>
> The modern concept of control recognizes the developing psychology of adolescence and regards control as a process of learning by which the pupil is guided in the development of self-control and recognition of his responsibilities to the group consonant with good citizenship in a democratic society.[4]

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[4]Walter S. Monroe, ed., Encyclopedia of Educational Research, rev. ed. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1950), p. 1198.

My own review of the professional literature of World War II and the Post War era supports Monroe's contention that there was a general consensus on the goal of good discipline. The professional literature on school discipline consistently emphasized that self-discipline for democratic citizenship was the undisputed goal of the classroom disciplinary process.

If educators were so confident in 1950 as to what constituted good discipline we are faced with the question, what happened in the next twenty years that has resulted in a "crisis in school discipline" and a monotonous Gallup Poll that consistently cites "discipline" as the number one problem in the schools? To understand this change we must first look at what was happening in American society immediately after World War II and its relationship to school discipline as revealed in the professional literature. We must review how the "new discipline" was supposed to work, and how it failed. Then we will explore what occurred in its wake.

IV. America in the immediate post war, post depression, but budding nuclear era has best been characterized as a society obsessed with security; economic security, national security, and emotional security. The literature on school discipline confirms this national picture. Mid-twentieth century educators in their attempt to implement "good discipline" meshed the ideas of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, the Mental Hygienists, and this national obsession with security.

My review of the professional literature revealed that many educators believed that teachers could provide a sense of emotional security for the child, promote democratic society, and promote self-discipline, while maintaining adequate classroom decorum. Security, it was asserted, was to be found in membership in a group, specifically a democratically run classroom. Children who did not conform to this pattern would consequently not have access to the psychological security of group membership. Thus the threat of social isolation was sufficient, in most cases, to assure conformity and classroom decorum.

For those "different" children for whom group security was insufficient to assure classroom conformity, mental hygienists had specific recommenations for the teacher. The most crucial element, according to the advice of the mental hygienists, in resolving the problems of the nonconforming child was to find the cause of the problem. The problem could stem from the home, the school, the teacher, a friend, health, the environment, or the psychological needs of the child. If the cause of the problem could be found then somehow the teacher could solve it.

More widespread in the professional literature than either the ideas on democratic group control or the importance of security per se was a multitude of friendly tips from classroom teachers and college professors. These "tricks of the trade," as they were termed, included everything for the teacher from how to organize a classroom and the importance of knowledge of subject matter to how to write on the blackboard without turning one's back. Fairly consistent "tricks of the trade" could range from a concise list of

three items to a dozen or more "do and don'ts" of classroom discipline.

But this picture of so called "ideal school discipline" at mid-twentieth century was developing critics much more rapidly than it had developed supporters. Once again, as with Mann and Dewey, educators were firm in their purpose, but ambivalent as to many of the implications of some of the methods. And again, a quest for better methods of achieving school discipline was begun. And again, the quest was influenced by changes in the general society. But this time the changes in society would affect not only the methods of school discipline, but its very purpose.

V. Two major social changes occurred which directly affected both the methods and the purpose of school discipline in the period after 1960. They were, 1.) a new recognition of social diversity and individual rights; and 2.) a shift from a producer to a consumer society.

The first major social change was the picture of who constituted "the Americans." By the early 1960's the picture of a social structure built on conformity to group norms became more and more tenuous as a diversity of "non-conforming" groups including Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, Asians, homosexuals, women, and even children, wanted membership in the so called "democratic society." With this growing reaction to conformity and the increased emphasis on the rights of diverse racial, ethnic, and social groups, the rights of the individual also became a critical concern. American educators became keenly aware of the power and the threat of diversity as they discovered the "other America," the America of the

poor, rarely alluded to in the professional literature before 1960. The power of conformity, crucial to the society of 1950, rapidly died as a means of control as these diverse populations became the overriding concern of educators in the classroom.

The second major social change, the shift from a producer society to a consumer society is much more important than has generally been recognized by educators. There was a change in the basic picture of what had constituted a democratic, production oriented society. As stated previously, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been characterized by a faith in a democratic government and a faith in economic expansion and production. These faiths underwent radical changes in the last half of this twentieth century. Let us look at what happened.

VI. After sixteen years of economic depression and war, the United States in 1945 emerged as the economic and political leader of the free world. These old faiths in production and democracy were maintained in the post war years, but with serious qualifiers. American democracy became more and more allied with the concept of the possession of material goods than ever before in its history. Similarly the answer to Americans' obsession with security seemed to be found in material abundance. Historically, economic security could be achieved through ever increasing production. But by mid-twentieth century an increase in production could only be sustained by continually creating new wants or "needs" for the American people.

By the early 1960's a faith in continued prosperity and security seemed to be assured through government regulation and increased consumption. America, however, paid a heavy price. For a nation that had been the economic sustainer of the free world during World War II, by 1963 the United States was exporting only 4% of its gross national product. By the 1970's consumption had clearly replaced production as the major characteristic of American society. By the 1980's the United States had become a debtor nation consuming more than it produced. This faith in increased consumption as the cornerstone of democracy and economic security, as well as emotional well being, became the dominant characteristic of American society in the last quarter of this twentieth century.

It is important for us to clearly understand how significant this shift in economic and social purpose from a producer society to a consumer society is, especially as it impacts our understanding of both the purpose and methods of school discipline. Let us contrast the two types of society, and their corresponding types of discipline.

VII. An industrialized, production oriented society, wrote Paul Nystrom in 1929, "develops its own ideals of life and puts its own stamp of approval on such virtues as working efficiency, special working ability, industry, thrift, sobriety."[5] These characteristics

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[5]Paul Nystrom, Economic Principals of Consumption, (1929), p. 5, cited in Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), p. 52.

listed by Nystrom were also the qualities sought in the children who were someday to be part of that society. Horace Mann in 1848 saw the "wheels of production" (to use his phrase) directly linked to the education and discipline of school children.[6] Schools would be the place where the values and behavior patterns conducive to a production society would be inculcated. Similarly, Dewey recognized the need for qualities of discipline which would result in production oriented citizens. The discipline for the education of a "producer" called for setting goals for the future and working toward those goals. The education and discipline of a "producer" meant developing a sense of satisfaction in the process of learning and doing in the absence of immediate external gratification, even if educators did not always know exactly how this was to be accomplished!

The characteristics of a producer society--efficiency, thrift, sobriety, and delayed gratification are not the characteristics needed to sustain a consumer society. A consumer society, now assumed to be vital to continued prosperity, had to be created. This task fell to the profession of advertising. The major task of advertising was to create a demand for consumption.

Drawing from the writings of contemporary social analysts such as John Kenneth Galbraith, Jules Henry, David Potter, Christopher Lasch, Stuart Ewen, and Eugene Linden, we see that Americans do not

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[6]Horace Mann, "Twelfth Annual Report," (1848) in The Republic and the School, ed, Lawrence Cremin (New York: Teachers College Bureau of Publication, 1947), p. 89.

rest easy with the image of being a consumer society. Not only is consumerism counter to traditional American beliefs and standards, but consumerism itself creates anxieties and conflicts. Advertising's primary technique is to create personal anxiety. Unlike a production society in which the objective is to satisfy people's basic wants, a consumer society is dependent on continually creating new dissatisfactions. In brief, the more one has, the more one needs. Second, the consumer society creates anxiety because advertising, especially the best advertising, appeals to the psychological, emotional, moral, and religious needs of the consumer. The consumer society attempts to satisfy these needs with material goods, leaving a psychological void between the real thing and a consumable substitute.

A consumer society, unlike a producer society, is concerned with neither the past nor the future. It is only concerned with present gratification. It relies on continued novelty, not continuity or stability. Even more critical to us, a consumer society creates a different set of truths, truths described by Jules Henry, as "pecuniary truths" based on the need to sell.

Last, but most important to our interest in school discipline, members of a consumer society, as opposed to those of a producer society, are not rewarded for self-denial or self-discipline. Jules Henry describes this relationship between immediate gratification which is vital to a consumer society and the traditional emphasis on self-discipline: "Man in our culture," he wrote in 1963,

> has always bargained his impulses against higher goods--he has always sought to trade one day of abstinance against economic gain or against an eternity of supernatural blessings. But when the sacrifice of impulse release no longer assures reward on earth or in heaven he will no longer keep his cravings under control unless he is punished.[7]

With this contrasting picture of producer and consumer societies, it becomes rapidly apparent that the long term goals of self-discipline as preparation for group membership in a democratic society and the production oriented goals of thrift, sobriety, diligence, responsibility, hard work, and delayed gratification are not conducive to, nor supportive of, a consumer society. Reflecting on our description of a consumer society, I will offer the following seven characteristics that appear to me to be essential to the discipline of a member of such a society:

1. The consumer must experience some uneasiness or dissatisfaction with him/herself based on a comparative social image.

2. The consumer must be able to find at least partial satisfaction in the accumulation of material goods.

3. The consumer must be more concerned with the present than with understanding the past or planning for the future.

4. The consumer must desire change, novelty, and diversity.

5. The consumer must be comfortable with a flexible standard of truth.

6. The consumer must see him/herself as of primary importance.

7. The consumer must be accustomed to immediate gratification of needs.

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[7]Jules Henry, Culture Against Man (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 21-22.

The objectives and practices of discipline for a producer and discipline for a consumer are obviously in direct conflict. Traditional American school discipline has been discipline for production. Herein lies the "crisis" in school discipline. The educator today is asked to "discipline" children for two socially conflicting goals. Historically in America, we have assumed that we were educating (or at least attempting to educate) producers, as the future contributing members of a democratic society. We have maintained our belief in that assumption even as the goals and demands of our society have changed.

We can only understand this change by recognizing the conflicts and contradictions between disciplining children in a producer versus a consumer society. Let me add as clarification, I am not equating democracy and production. I am, however, saying that they are compatible goals for school discipline.

The characteristics of discipline for a producer society are familiar to us all: responsibility, hard work, self-control, ability to work with others, diligence, delayed gratification, etc.. They are what teachers have expected in the classroom and industry has expected in the workforce. The characteristics of discipline for a consumer society are not in keeping with our traditional objectives, but these characteristics permeate, one might even say dominate, our society.

VII. We must now ask the question, what has been the response of educators to this new American society in terms of school discipline? Educators have had two responses; 1.) they stopped

talking about goals, and 2.) they concentrated almost exclusively on methods. Let us look at this pattern in more detail.

First, educators discontinued addressing the philosophical question of the long term goals of school discipline. The professional literature on school discipline before 1960 was replete with references to the importance of self-disciplined citizens for membership in a democratic society. I must add that educators by the 1930's had generally stopped discussing the role of production and limited their goal to the seemingly loftier and less controversial goal of sustaining a democracy. However, after 1960 even the abstract goal of democratic participation was rarely alluded to.

This pattern was reinforced by the growing reliance on "legal" interpretations of individual rights. As we all know, this shift gave added impetus to the power of the courts to determine individual behavior within the schoolhouse. As a result, school disciplinary goals and practices became more frequently determined by judges than by educators, justifying the latter's abdication of their former responsibilites. With this shift in perspective from philosophy to law, the purpose of school discipline became more and more a legal question of what was <u>allowed</u>, than a philosophical question of what <u>ought to be.</u>

The second response by educators after 1960 was to concentrate on finding workable methods of immediate control in the classroom without regard to general long term social purpose. This increased emphasis on methodology was in the late 1950's and early 1960's a

search for a "science of classroom discipline." But by the early 1970's the search for a science rapidly degenerated (or expanded, depending on one's point of view) into a tidal wave of what I have termed "cookbook discipline." Dozens of different strategies of classroom discipline were "marketed" to teachers via university and college classrooms, workshops, seminars, books, and pilot projects. I am not saying that these "strategies" (or recipes) for discipline were void of theory or philosophy. There were as many theories and philosophies as there were strategies. But my review of the professional literature revealed that it was not the underlying philosophies that were being emphasized, it was whether the strategy worked!

By the early 1980's, when no simple strategy (or recipe) proved to be a panacea for problems in the classroom, teachers were encouraged to pick and choose "what worked" for them. A teacher might use behavior modification techniques on one child and reality therapy on another. A child could be guided by William Glasser in the first grade, Lee Canter in the second, and on and on for at least twelve years. The mathematical possibilities for the number of discipline recipes that a child could be subject to are almost infinite. It is not my purpose to criticize these theories or their authors. As an elementary special education teacher myself, I have been greatly influenced by many of them and have gained much insight into human behavior and how to "manage a classroom" from them.

One could also reasonably argue that what occurred was that the old "tricks of the trade" that teachers shared in earlier days had just been transferred to systematized, marketable packages. Certainly teachers have always randomly picked and chosen their methods of classroom disciplinary procedures.

The problem lies, however, in the fact that this emphasis on immediate control in the classroom completely negated any concern for long term social purpose for classroom disciplinary procedures. The relationship of means to end that was stressed in our first three quotations by Horace Mann, John Dewey, and even Walter Monroe, and I might add many others, was, after 1965, not even a viable topic of discussion among educators in the professional literature on school discipline.

By contrast, our last quotation by Eric Haralson is typical of the writing of the 1970's. He addresses only the immediate need for control within the schoolhouse. "[Discipline]," he wrote in 1979, "[is the] sum of all decisions and actions school people take to maintain some semblance of institutional order and continuity through the school day and year."[8] Haralson is typical of his historical period as he completely divorces the question of school discipline from any long term social purpose outside maintenance of order in the schoolhouse.

VIII. The next question that we must ask is, "Why did educators make these two responses?" Why did they ignore the question of long

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[8]Eric Haralson, "Advocacy Groups and Student Discipline," Education and Urban Society, 11 (Aug. 1979), 527.

term social goals? Why did they concentrate on quick, easy, and I might add sellable, techniques for classroom control? The answer lies in the significant shift from a producer to a consumer society. First it lies in America's uneasiness with being a consumer society; and second, it lies with the inherent demands of a consumer society for its continued maintenance.

As stated previously, the characteristics of a consumer society are not in keeping with our traditional objectives, but these characteristics permeate our society. We are uncomfortable with the idea of a goal of education being discipline to promote consumption. Therefore, we have "assumed" that we all knew what the goals of school discipline were. In brief, what we do not discuss will not distress us. (One might well make the argument that this was the same unacknowledged reason why the question of sustaining a production society disappeared in the 1930's.)

Furthermore, we must recognize that a society which demonstrates the qualities of consumerism quickly becomes dependent on them. This dependence is the very rationale for increased consumption. But a society which is founded on personal anxiety, novelty, half truths, continued ego enhancement, and immediate gratification is, as explained by Jules Henry, also in need of direct immediate control to maintain social stability. Historically, the school has been the major instrument of social control. But social control for a democratic producer society has been compatible with the immediate discipline goals of the teacher in the classroom.

This same compatibility does not exist within a consumer society. Direct immediate control to balance the needs of consumerism is the social control needed by contemporary American society. The pattern is one of increased gratification and increased control. Consumer gratification and manipulation serve as the reason for control, and often as the means of control, i.e., psychological manipulation, behavioral control techniques, material rewards, and emphasis on making the child "feel important." Thus educators have been developing "means" to control society without coming to grips with the philosophical implications of their work.

Uncomfortable with this goal, educators have ignored it or concentrated on the "means" of control. But, as John Dewey stated eighty-eight years ago, the means and the end are interdependent. For educators today, the "crisis in school discipline" will not be resolved by developing a multi-volume cookbook of student control strategies from which teachers can pick and choose their favorite recipes. Nor can educators confine their philosophical purposes of school discipline to what is determined by judges. The law reflects a society's philosophy and purpose; it cannot determine them.

The conflict for today's educators lies in the fact that the structure and the goals of the American school were established in a period when Americans had an unyielding faith in democracy and an expanding production oriented society that no longer exists. The challenge for educators today is to find a sense of purpose in our present society and to be able to relate that purpose to constructive goals of behavior within the classroom. Classroom

teachers must have the opportunity to address the why's of what is happening in the classroom beyond the question of why a particular "recipe" works. Classroom teachers must have the opportunity to relate what they do on a daily basis to the purpose and needs of the larger society. And, last, all educators must face the very difficult realization that their larger social purpose might well be the maintenance of a consumer society.

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